United Nations S/2017/731*

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 August 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 23 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 2 August 2017, the United States of America, also on behalf of France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, reportedly submitted a report to you and the Security Council regarding the test launch of the Simorgh satellite launch vehicle, claiming that the launch was inconsistent with paragraph 3 of annex B to Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). That claim is neither technically correct nor legally sound. It is a matter of serious concern that some permanent members of the Security Council misrepresent the provisions of Security Council resolutions and obfuscate the facts for biased political objectives. In that regard, I would like to bring to your attention and to the attention of the Security Council the following points for clarification:

(a) On 27 July 2017, as part of the inauguration of the Imam Khomeini National Space Station, which oversees the preparation, launch, control and steering of the satellite launch vehicles, the Simorgh satellite launch vehicle was test launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran. That is merely part of a scientific and technological activity related to the use of space technology in such areas as disaster management, environmental monitoring and natural resource management, communication, human health, food security and sustainable agriculture, which are common features and requirements of the socioeconomic development of every society. This is an inherent right of any State and, for its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to continue to exercise this right for its socioeconomic interests;

(b) The aforementioned report is basing its argument on the criteria used in the Missile Technology Control Regime and is attempting to imply that the definition of that 35-member exclusive and closed political club, serving the commercial and security interests of its members, is an "internationally accepted definition"! However, interestingly, according to the Missile Technology Control Regime documentation, there is a clear difference between "ballistic missile systems" and "space launch vehicles";

(c) It is also an acknowledged fact that satellite launch vehicles are designed for placing satellites into orbit, not delivering warheads. The technical characteristics and operational requirements of the satellite launch vehicles clearly make them distinct from ballistic missile systems. The Simorgh satellite launch vehicle, which is designed and developed exclusively for placing satellites into orbit, is no exception;

* Reissued for technical reasons on 1 September 2017.

17-14629* (E) 070917

Please recycle

(d) Whereas the Simorgh satellite launch vehicle does not even fall into the category of ballistic missiles, let alone one "designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons", as referred to in annex B to resolution 2231 (2015), it is quite clear that its test launch is not covered, in any way, by resolution 2231 (2015) and, accordingly, could not be regarded as inconsistent with that resolution. As there is no technical or legal basis in resolution 2231 (2015) on satellite launch vehicles, the drafters of the aforementioned report have unsuccessfully resorted to using the phrase "if configured as a ballistic missile" at several instances in their report, in order to establish an imaginary link between resolution 2231 (2015) and the test launch of the Simorgh satellite launch vehicle. The fact that they have based their argument about the inconsistency of the test launch of Simorgh satellite launch vehicle with resolution 2231 (2015) on completely incorrect technical assumptions and "ifs" proves the incorrectness and falsehood of their conclusion;

(e) The claim of the inconsistency of the test launch of the Simorgh satellite launch vehicle with resolution 2231 (2015) is entirely politically motivated. If such a claim continues, it would endanger the exercise of the inherent right of States to free access to all areas of space and celestial bodies, their freedom in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and their free access to outer space through space science, technologies and their applications without discrimination of any kind;

(f) Considering the above-mentioned facts, I respectfully urge you to refrain from including, in your biannual reports on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), issues that are beyond the mandate set forth in the note by the President of the Security Council on Security Council tasks under resolution 2231 (2015) (S/2016/44), as that would inevitably be a disservice to the credibility of the reports.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative